

**Minutes of the
Michigan Snowmobile and Trails Advisory Council
July 9, 2013
Draft**

The meeting of the Michigan Snowmobile and Trails Advisory Council (MSTAC) was called to order by Chair Frank Wheatlake at 10:02 a.m., on Tuesday, July 9, 2013, at the Ralph A. MacMullan Conference Center, 104 Conservation Drive, Roscommon, Michigan 48653. The following members were present:

*Frank Wheatlake
Sandra Batie
James Dickie
James Duke
Michael Foote
Carolyn Kane
Nancy Krupiarz
William D. Manson, Jr.
Greg Yager*

The following Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff were present: *Donna Stine*, Executive Office; *Jim Radabaugh, Anna Sylvester, and Victoria Lischalk*, Parks and Recreation Division; *LT Andrew Turner*, Law Enforcement Division (LED); *Dennis Nezich and Scott Heather*, Forestry Resources Division, (FRD).

ACTION ITEMS

MOTION: Mr. James Dickie moved to approve the July 9, 2013 meeting agenda. The motion was seconded by Ms. Nancy Krupiarz and it carried unanimously.

MOTION: Mr. James Dickie moved to approve the May 15, 2013 minutes. The motion was seconded by Ms. Nancy Krupiarz and it carried unanimously.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

Julie Clark was introduced as the Liaison for the Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee.

CORRESPONDENCE

Houghton Lake Trailblazers

The April 13, 2013 Houghton Lake Trailblazers Snowmobile Club correspondence was presented.

The correspondence was referred to the Snowmobile Advisory Workgroup (SAW) after the May 15th conference call. Mr. Radabaugh stated that the department contacted the club; however no correspondence had been made between the Houghton Lake Trailblazers and SAW. Chairman Wheatlake requested Mr. Jim Radabaugh make phone contact with the Houghton Lake Trailblazers and report at the next meeting.

Mid-Michigan Community Pathway Group (MMCP)

Chair Wheatlake received emails from Steve Clark and John Matonich of the MMCP regarding the proposed trail system connecting the Pere Marquette Trail (Clare), Fred Meijer Trail (Alma), and the Shiawassee-Ionia Trail (St. Johns's) along the US-127 corridor. The emails stated that a letter was drafted by MMCP members and submitted by Steve Davidson, MMCP President, to the DNR stating that the connection was not named into the MDNR's Comprehensive Trail Plan. MMCP requested that the 40+ mile railway be represented in the MDNR Comprehensive Trail Plan. Discussion followed with the understanding that not all trail connectivity or initiative was identified by name in the final MDNR's Comprehensive Trail Plan.

Ms. Carolyn Kane discussed with the committee that she has attended meetings held by MMCP. Ms. Kane explained the MMCP's objective is to make a connection that will bring nonmotorized trail opportunities more into the center of the state. Some small communities have been left out and MMCP views this as an opportunity to include these areas. MSTAC may want to reach out to the group as they may be an important connector. With this information Chair Wheatlake will respond to Mr. Davidson asking him to contact him for further discussion.

Chair Wheatlake also requested Ms. Donna Stine respond to the MMCP.

BUSINESS ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Timber Sales Process – Presentation by Dennis Nezich and Scott Heather, FRD

A copy of the presentation was provided to the committee. Discussion followed regarding clarification of audit and recertification, advertisement of open houses open to the public, boiler plate for timber sales specifications, and the ability to cross berms during hunting.

Information will be provided to MSTAC for the FRD website for open houses held by FRD.

Kristen Thrall, Recreation Program Manager, United States Department of Agriculture gave a brief overview of the federal timber sales process.

Nonmotorized Advisory Workgroup (NAW) Appointees

Chair Wheatlake appointed three additional members and one reappointment to the NAW. They will have a two year term starting July 9, 2013 and expires July 1, 2015.

Scott TenBrink – Health & Fitness (re-appointment)

Emily Meyerson – Community Planner & Multi-Use Non-motorized Trail User (fill current vacancy)

Andrea Ketchmark – Hiking – North Country National Scenic Trail Association (new member)

Mary Bohling – Water Trails (new member)

Laura Tropea – Mountain Biking (new member)

Off-Road Vehicle Advisory Workgroup (ORVAW) Appointees

Chair Wheatlake appointed two new members to the ORVAW. They will have a one year term expiring July 1, 2014.

Mr. Skip Schulz – UP ORV TDA President
Mr. Donald Helsel – MI-TRALE Organization

MSTAC

Chair Wheatlake discussed the Future of MSTAC. All appointed members will expire January, 2014. Chair Wheatlake has advocated for MSTAC to continue. Discussion was held on the process of the appointment of members. The MSTAC members are currently appointed by the Governor. Chair Wheatlake asked the committee if they are in concurrence with a change to have the appointments be the responsibility of the DNR Director. The committee is in concurrence with the change. The committee is asked to share with Mr. Jim Radabaugh their interest to continue with their membership. The committee has discussed and agreed that it is imperative that snowmobiles and equestrian remain a part of the committee. Chair Wheatlake will continue the conversation with Keith Creagh, DNR Director.

MSTAC Order of Priority

Ms. Donna Stine presented to the committee a list of Comprehensive Trail Plan priority recommendations. Ms. Stine stated that the DNR will assist in the process. Discussion was held on each category.

- *Track Progress of the Plan*
- *Conflict Resolution*
Ms. Sandra Batie suggested Ms. Jan Herrick of the ETS Workgroup give a presentation on Conflict Resolution. Chair Wheatlake recommended the presentation be at the October MSTAC meeting. Ms. Batie will contact Ms. Herrick to schedule.
- *Priority Process*
Chair Wheatlake would like each of the trail subcommittees meet to gather an inventory and discuss priorities for trails and trail connectors. Each subcommittee's findings will be discussed at the October MSTAC meeting.
- *Survey Users*
- *Biennial Trail Summit*
MRPA has an annual trails summit which will meet the requirement for the Biennial Trail Summit. Mr. Radabaugh and Ms. Stine are working with the MRPA trails committee to ensure all requirements are met. The summit is held in Traverse City in January 20-24 2014. Chairman Wheatlake asked Mr. Radabaugh to check the funding to allow all members to participate in the summit.
- *Restructure Committee*
MSTAC Committee as a whole has been in place for four years. A review of restructure for term limits may be necessary. A presentation for different areas of interest was discussed as agenda items for each type of representative.

Suggestion is to invite groups of similar interest to discuss how trails interact with their business plans. The committee agrees and is willing to travel to be able to hear from all groups.

- *Volunteer Recognition*
A suggestion was made to invite the Friends Committee of PRD to attend a MSTAC meeting to give a presentation.
- *Raise limit to \$500,000 limit from Trust Fund (Currently \$300,000)*
Chairman Wheatlake will contact the Trust Fund Committee to discuss the support for a change to increase. Ms. Stine will provide information to Chairman Wheatlake regarding to assist in the discussion. Chairman Wheatlake will review with MSTAC in October.
- *Organize (assist) Trail User Types*
There has been progress with identifying nonmotorized types of users. Ms. Kristen Thrall has contacts to invite groups to MSTAC meetings. It's beneficial to have all the groups come together at a MSTAC meeting and discuss their concerns. DNR can assist with cross country ski trails on how to permit and how issues are managed.

Statewide Trails Network Plan

Ms. Stine reported Ms. Clark is doing an economic analysis for TART trails; working with the foundation community to have a model developed for economic impact of trails. This model can be used by any department or any government entity to complete an economic impact for the analysis. This is funded by the foundation.

Work is also being done to standardize the application for the Friends organizations.

User fees increase proposal for ORV's is currently at the Governor's office for signature. PA 75' 13 (HB 4669) – ORV License Restructuring – The act amends Part 811 of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act to restructure the off-road vehicle (ORV) license from \$16.25 to \$26.25 for ORVs not used on state ORV trails or \$36.25 for ORVs that are used on state ORV trails. It's estimated that this will add \$2.7 million in new funding towards the ORV program per year. There are expenditures identified and proposals in the plans for expanding trail systems. Chair Wheatlake requested information on the ORV fee distribution.

Issues regarding land use rules will be brought to three public hearings:

- Cross country skiing and protecting the integrity of a "groomed" trail was discussed. This will impact all trail users.
- Currently land use rules prohibit commercial activity without permit on state trails or lands which has not allowed for business signage. Amending that portion of the land use rules to allow for a signage to link trails and communities.
- Land Use rule change to not require a permit for events regardless of the number of participants, making the rule more like the federal government. There is no number requirement. The request is for the event.

Mr. Radabaugh will send information regarding the public hearings and the fee distribution for ORV to the committee.

Showcase Trail Plan (Belle Isle to Ironwood)

Mr. Radabaugh reports the Governor requested the DNR be the lead to develop a plan for the Showcase Trail. A plan has been drafted by a group of staff from MDOT, MEDC, MDARD and DNR. A draft of the plan is currently in the Governor's office being reviewed. The plan provides information on leverage, current trail systems and current trail initiatives which gives an idea of developing the 1000 mile trail from the Detroit area to the Wisconsin Area. The plan implementation could take three to five years to attain.

North Eastern State Trail

The North Eastern State Trail is the rail trail that was improved which runs from Alpena to Cheboygan and was dedicated the summer of 2012. The trail was designated as a National Recreational Trail by the U. S. Department of Interior during National Trails Day in June 2013, joining 27 trails across the country as Designated National Recreation Trails. Currently Michigan has three (3) recognized trails. This gives notoriety to Michigan Trails on a national perspective.

A handout was provided in the committee packet regarding Michigan's Trails Week to be held in September. If there is an event that individual organizations or clubs would like to have elevated that will be held during the week, there is an email to submit information to which will post the event to a webpage that will have a list of all the events. This coincides with National Public Lands Day, which is the last day of the week. It's proposed it will be a free day for all trails federal lands, state lands, and state parks.

A large article was written by Howard Meyerson on trails throughout the state he included the Upper Peninsula and the Iron Ore Heritage Trail. The article was in several newspapers across the state and also on MLive. Mr. Radabaugh will send the MLive link to the members.

Non-Agenda Items

None

Law Enforcement Update

LT Andrew Turner reported two new ORV instructor courses were concluded in June. The academies were held at the RAM with 35 new ORV instructors trained. The LAW Division continues to look for options in the Upper Peninsula to hold academies. There is a strong demand for instructors. The ORV Safety online course will be live at any time. Currently the LAW Division is working on hiring 30 conservation officers at the beginning of the fiscal year and will attend the academy in January 2014.

Planning Document Goals Matrix

A handout was provided in the committee packet. The committee reviewed and discussed the information the matrix provided. This document captures all of the recent plans and the recommendations where they are shared across the plans. The matrix was updated at the

MSPAC which reflects the current status. Chair Wheatlake would like the committee to review for an exercise at the next meeting.

Trails Analyst Position

A question was posed to Mr. Radabaugh regarding the vacant trails analyst position. Mr. Radabaugh responded with the assistance of Ms. Anna Sylvester. The plan for the position is to be rewritten to be classified as a recreation specialist. The goal is to change all analysts to specialists. This will provide one specialist for each of the eight districts. Each district also has a recreation planner. The position will have more duties covering a smaller geographic area with the ORV, snowmobiles, pathway and nonmotorized trails.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Snowmobile Advisory Workgroup SAW

Mr. Bill Manson reported the SAW meeting was held on June 18. Ms. Jackie Blodgett, PRD, provided a budget update on the permit sales. Total sold were 151,000 permits, 5/6 years ago 200,000+ were sold. In the previous year's 174,000 down to 130,000 then back up to 151,000. There was a strong rebound; there was hesitation last year because of the snowfall. No snowmobile business went out of business.

There are 6,500 miles of groomed snowmobiles trails, a total of 415,576 miles of trails were groomed. Fuel costs were up by .13 and fuel adjustments were made.

There was a discussion within the committee that reiterated that the changes in the signs last year did worked. The majority of users didn't notice that there was a sign change. Fatalities on the trail system were cut in half.

The grant manual was sent out to the grant sponsors on July 8th. In the future the information should be collected in May with grant manuals handed out and due in June in order to purchase the equipment in June.

Water Trails

Ms. Nancy Krupiarz reported the DEQ awarded 12 water trail proposals across the state ranging from \$11,000 to \$95,000 projects started July 1, 2013. Work is currently in progress on the inland lakes waterway trail from Cheboygan to Petoskey, using the same process as used in the Lake Michigan Water Trail.

Mountain biking groups are making good strides in working with the DNR to create a new trail in the Waterloo Recreation Area. The local chapter of MBA is working with park land managers to identify a route for a 20- 50 mile trail. It will connect with the Pinckney Recreation Area existing system. The goal is to model the trail equal to the Keweenaw model system that is referenced in the trails plan.

The Copper Harbor Trails Club is one of three winners nationally to receive a combined \$100,000 in trail building assistance. The funds will go towards work on the Overflow Trail. It will start 1/3 of the way up of Brockway Mountain and end near the bottom at M26 near an existing trail.

North County Trail Association and the National Park Services are working with the DNR to explore the Upper Peninsula portion of the Governor's proposal for the Showcase Trail between Belle Isle and Ironwood. The goal is to not impact the integrity of the North County Trail primarily used as a hiking and backpacking trail.

MDOT put out an RFP for regional nonmotorized advisory councils over the next two years. The bids are currently being accepted. The advisory committees are modeled after the metro region nonmotorized committee that has been in existence for about nine years; it has been the only region of MDOT that has had a nonmotorized committee. The committee brings together road commissions, councils of government, parks and recreation professionals, trail groups, non-profit groups and the metro parks in the Detroit area for continual discussion and brainstorming on a regional nonmotorized network.

The Mid-America Trails and Greenways Conference is currently accepting registrations. There is no website for the conference. More information is available on the Mid-America Trails and Greenways website. It will be held in Matteson, Illinois on October 27-30, 2013. Seven states will be represented.

Equine Trailways

Ms. Sandra Batie reported on the April 10, 2013 ETS meeting. The ETS had written PRD Chief Ron Olson requesting PRD to adopt the Recreation Trail Proposal Process. Chief Olson responded to the ETS and accepted the ETS suggestion noting that the addition of PRD lands into the RTPP process would be a good fit and outlined the next steps. Implementation progress on the merger of the two process will be discussed at the upcoming August 28, 2013 ETS meeting in Lansing.

A copy of the ETS report was provided to the committee.

Chair Wheatlake discussed setting up the meetings for calendar year 2014. The consensus of the committee is to wait until October to discuss.

MOTION: Mr. Jim Duke moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Sandra Batie.

Meeting adjourned at 2:08 p.m.

Next meeting scheduled for October 29, 2013 at the RAM.